

## MINUTES

### NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

August 13, 2015

Yarrow Golf and Conference Resort  
10499 North 48<sup>th</sup>, Augusta, MI 49012

#### Present for the Natural Resources Commission

John Matonich, chair  
J.R. Richardson, vice-chair  
Vicki Pontz  
Rex Schlaybaugh  
Christine Crumbaugh  
Louise Klarr  
Tim Nichols

#### Present for DNR staff

Bill Moritz, DNR natural resources deputy  
Peter Manning, legal counsel, Office of the Attorney General  
Dennis Knapp, DNR chief of staff  
Cheryl Nelson, executive assistant to the NRC

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**Chairman John Matonich** called the Committee of the Whole meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

With deep regret and sadness, Law Enforcement division chief **Hagler** announced the recent death of **F/Lt. Arthur Green, III**, District 9 Supervisor. **Chairman Matonich** requested a moment of silence to the memory of **Lt. Green**.

**Parks and Trails Update Ron Olson**, Parks and Recreation division chief, addressed the commission on trail coordinator positions and trail systems. Interviews for the Northern Lower and the Upper Peninsula trail coordinator positions have concluded. A number of grants have been awarded to the DNR for trail development and maintenance; twenty-two miles of the Hart-Montague Trail are now being resurfaced along with work on the Iron Belle Trail.

**Olson** noted that the 2015 new camper data show positive results. Eighty-nine percent rated their stay at a state park as good or very good. The off-road vehicle license sales are up 6.5 percent, trail use permit sales are up 22 percent and snowmobile permits are down 2.5 percent. Attendance at Belle Isle park is up from the previous year. Attendance in June 2014, the first month attendance numbers were available, was 286,000. June 2015 attendance was 430,000. In 2014, the island saw 2.3 million visitors.

**Top 11 Water Trails Kristin Phillips**, chief of the Marketing and Outreach division, updated the commission on a recent Michigan water trails promotion. The department partnered with Land Information Access Association on a one-week voting contest for the top 11 Michigan water trails. The promotion ran through digital and social media to gauge venue effectiveness. The promotion received over 4,000 hits with 700 votes cast. The top winner, the Au Sable River,

was a write-in candidate, followed by Blueways of St. Clair and Chain of Lakes. The same media plan was used to promote the results. The results page received 100,000 hits. **Phillips** noted that for future contests, issuing an official press release might increase voting participation by legitimizing the contest.

**County Visits Update** Regional Initiatives Deputy **Marc Miller** updated the commission on the third round of meetings with county officials from the counties with the highest percentage of public lands. The meetings covered many topics, including trails, access, wildlife, grants, specific parcel disposition and public lands strategy. **Miller** noted that the DNR is actively working to improve dialogue with county officials. **Miller** and the prosperity regional coordinators are also holding meetings with convention and visitor bureaus and local chambers of commerce.

**Blue Ribbon State Game Area Advisory Panel Update** **Miller** provided an update on the first meeting of the Blue Ribbon State Game Area Advisory Panel, which was held this past week. They laid groundwork of questions needed to be asked, and had staff presentations on history of state game areas in southwest Michigan. He noted that they had discussion about the next steps they should take, including where are these areas, the right level of funding, management and habitat. They will also be including discussion on recruitment and retention. He noted the outcome of this group should be very enlightening.

**Forest Stewardship** Forest Resources Stewardship Coordinator, **Mike Smalligan** talked about the forest stewardship program, what we are doing to help non-industrial private landowners. Many of the daily activities of the DNR staff benefit private forest land, including forest health, fire protection and forest management.

Next, chief **Bill O'Neill** talked about the program forestry participated in with some youth from the Detroit area, the Greening of Detroit. The department works closely with the organization, recently bringing youth from The Greening of Detroit to the Ralph A. MacMullan Conference Center for several days to learn more about forestry. It was a great experience, **O'Neill** noted, with active engagement from the forestry community.

**Kalamazoo River/Otsego Township Dam Status** Fisheries division's **Jay Wesley** talked about the Enbridge oil spill area noting that it's the 5-year anniversary of the spill and that Enbridge cleanup costs were \$1.2 billion. Wildlife division's **Steve Chadwick** talked about two dams in the Kalamazoo River that are failing, the Otsego Township dam and the Trowbridge Township dam. The department is working with the EPA to remove sediments behind the dams.

**Court of Claims Ruling Scientific Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act (SFWCA)** **Peter Manning** from the Attorney General's office reported that they Court of Claims recently ruled that the SFWCA is valid law and that the constitutional challenge by Keep Michigan Wolves Protected was dismissed. This ruling is being appealed by Keep Michigan Wolves Protected.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee**

The committee took a tour earlier this morning of the Fort Custer Recreation Area including portions of the Kalamazoo River affected by the Enbridge oil spill area. **Commissioner Klarr** noted that the area has much to offer and it's a huge partnership with the Army and this state park. She added that it was very beneficial to see everything happening on the ground.

### **NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries**

**Commissioner Schlaybaugh** noted they received fisheries and wildlife updates from chiefs **Dexter** and **Mason**. He summarized the orders they will be acting on today and next month. The committee received the final recommendations on waterfowl and other migratory birds, and received a report from chief **Mason** on chronic wasting disease, EHD, and Avian Influenza.

## **PUBLIC APPEARANCES**

(**Dennis Knapp**, chief of staff, read the official timekeeping procedures and guidelines for the meeting's public appearances which began at 3:42 p.m.)

**Amy Trotter, Deputy Director, MUCC, Ron Burris, President of MUCC and Drew YoungeDyke, Field and Public Relations Manager, MUCC** provided the results of the 2015 MUCC Convention recently held in Gaylord. **Burris** shared with the commission the major restructuring of the Board of Directors, organizational structure and the governing by-laws for MUCC. These 2016 changes will preserve the opportunity for continued involvement with MUCC members as well as protect the grassroots nature of conservation policy adoption and engagement, while at the same time securing MUCC's future through an improved governance process. **Drew YoungeDyke** and **Amy Trotter** took turns summarizing the approved wildlife and fisheries resolutions.

**Tracy Lynn, Keep Michigan Wolves Protected**, provided some information on the reasons there should not be a wolf hunt now or in the future. She testified that wolves are not a measurable threat to humans or livestock.

**Dan Kimmel, Michigan BASS Nation** talked about the catch and delayed release (CDR) Bass Season/Aquatic Plant Control. He urged the commission to continue supporting more bass fishing opportunity. His group wants to fish as much as possible without harming the renewable resource which is the bass population. **Kimmel** does not believe that we have harmed the fishery in over 45 years of spawn fishing. Their primary purpose is to promote and preserve bass fishing. Bass need habitat and forage, they have an issue that aquatic plant control is needed.

**B. Iris Potter**, came to testify that a wolf hunt is wrong. She believes the science indicates that it is wrong, and also notes that it is not socially acceptable. **Potter** states that wolves are an essential part of Michigan's ecosystem. Persons with livestock should use non-lethal methods of harassment against the wolf. **Potter** does not want politics to trump science, and asks the commission to listen to the people.

**Ronald Arndt**, testified about wolf hunting and stated his belief that there are not enough wolves to hunt and he would like to see them protected.

**Catherine Sugas**, came to discuss wolf hunting by conveying her concerns and hopes for the wolves for the future. She stated that wolves are vitally important to keep balance in our environment and that they are majestic animals that deserve to live. She asked the commission to protect the wolves.

**John Hunter**, came to discuss a few fishing issues on proposed fishing regulation changes. He wants to leave the steelhead limit on several rivers at three, not drop it down to one or two. He also discussed chumming, and does not think it is a hazard to the water or anything else.

**Scott Danek, Fish Forever United**, believes there is abundant, current science that indicates that CDR is a bad idea. He has spoken to several biologists who also believe that the proposed early season CDR will not be good for Michigan's fisheries. He asks that the department take the next several years to study the effects of year-round catch and immediate (CIR) release instead.

**Frank Corl and Luke Yasuhara, Down River Bass**, stated that his group has always practiced CIR. He does not feel there has been enough research/study on the effects of CDR. Critical information is required on CDR and he adds that the study should be done on four or five lakes, not 16, then the information will be more reliable. It should have a genetic component. CDR during the spawn will cause certain nest mortality. A scientific study is needed over 10-15 years. They suggest alternatives to the 16 lake study; use volunteers with the biologists, let the volunteers crunch the data and analysis, and to team up or recruit a university to conduct a study. Abandon early season CDR and move to a major league fishing type tournament, which minimizes nest and fish mortality. Continue to require scientific study of CDR before initiating a season.

**Tom Duffield** emphasized his point on wolf hunting and adds that there are enough studies out there to make the right decision. He hopes the commission makes their decision based on what they know.

**Jerry Gostenik**, came to share his opinion regarding CDR bass regulations. **Gostenik** stated that he thinks 16 lakes is too many to get meaningful data, that the number should be one to four. He asks that Burt, Mullet and Charlevoix lakes be eliminated from the list. **Gostenik** is against the CDR season dates. He would like to see more protective measures, and suggests the commission look at closing the harvest season to align with Lake St. Clair for all lakes north of Bay City.

**Lydia Lohrer**, noted factual inaccuracies in fisheries order 215.15 regarding CDR. She adds that the state has had a successful CIR, which brought about a windfall of tourists, everyone had the opportunity to fish. **Lohrer** told the commission not to ignore the science, that CDR will damage the fishery long-term.

**Bruce Yinger, Down River Bass** talked about the CDR bass regulations and that biologists need to determine how much fishing pressure will be on the 16 noted lakes before an actual

season occurs. A trained, licensed biologist should be on site for the tournaments and the tournament organizers should pay for fees that would cover the extra costs to gather the data.

**Cheryl Barea**, came to discuss the potential issue of wolves being delisted from federal protection, which could result in another wolf hunt in Michigan. She stated that there was a lack of science involved in delisting the wolf. **Barea** asked the commission to conclude that a wolf hunting season is not warranted.

**Chauncey Moran** came to give his input on the Cornish Game Area noting that it is important that the department see what type of waterfowl harvest is going to happen and there should be conservation officers covering the area. He proposed this area as a perfect opportunity to have a controlled hunt operated out of Plainwell.

**Chairman Matonich** adjourned the public appearances portion of the meeting at 4:37 p.m. and called to order the regular meeting of the NRC at 4:38 p.m. He noted that all commissioners who were present at the Committee of the Whole were present for the regular meeting.

#### REGULAR MEETING OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

#### FOR INFORMATION ONLY NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

**Cornish State Game Area; Listing and Additional Rules, Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 10 of 2015**

**Fisheries Order 204.16, Spawning Closures (to be amended)**

**Fisheries Order 210.16, Designated Trout Streams for Michigan**

#### NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION ACTION ITEMS

#### Approval of Minutes, July 9, 2015, Natural Resources Commission Meeting

**Commissioner Klarr** made a motion that the minutes of the July 9, 2015 NRC meeting be approved. **Commissioner Nichols** supported the motion. **Matonich** called for discussion, there being none, a vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

#### **Pierce Road Unit Special Hunt Opportunities at the Sharonville State Game Area, Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 7 of 2015**

**Commissioner Schlaybaugh** moved that Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 7 of 2015, Pierce Road Unit Special Hunt Opportunities at the Sharonville State Game Area be adopted. **Commissioner Nichols** supported the motion. **Matonich** called for discussion, there being none, a vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

#### **Waterfowl and Other Migratory Bird Hunting Regulations for 2015-2016, Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 8 of 2015**

**Commissioner Schlaybaugh** moved that Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 8 of 2015, Waterfowl and Other Migratory Bird Hunting Regulations for 2015-2016 be adopted. **Commissioner Crumbaugh** supported the motion. **Matonich** called for discussion, there being none, a vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

**Chronic Wasting Disease Response Measures for Deer in Clinton, Ingham and Shiawassee Counties**

**Commissioner Schlaybaugh** moved that Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 9 of 2015, Chronic Wasting Disease Response Measures for Deer in Clinton, Ingham and Shiawassee Counties be adopted. **Commissioner Nichols** supported the motion. **Matonich** called for discussion, there being none, a vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

**DIRECTOR – FOR INFORMATION ONLY AND ACTION ITEMS**

**Chairman Matonich** listed the “for information only” items listed on the agenda.

**Deputy Moritz** then listed the “director’s action” items listed on the agenda and indicated he would approve all items on behalf of **Director Creagh**.

**COMMISSIONER REPORTS**

**Commissioner Pontz** has been enjoying the state’s trail system. She had a nice opportunity earlier this week in Detroit with graduates of the Great Lakes Leadership Academy and staff from Parks and Recreation division as they got together to discuss the summer youth employment program and ways to supplement by partnering with private agencies.

**Commissioner Schlaybaugh** attended the ruffed grouse chapter of Petoskey board meeting, noting that there is much enthusiasm about the season this year, that they are pleased to see the work Wildlife is doing putting GEMS in northern lower Michigan. He also thanked **Commissioner Klarr** for the morning’s tour of the Fort Custer Recreation Area.

**Commissioner Crumbaugh** toured Oregon and their state parks; she thinks the state of our parks is far above and beyond what other states have done.

**Commissioner Richardson** shared that he went on vacation to Canada.

**Commissioner Klarr** thanked all that came out to the Fort Custer Recreation Area today.

**Deputy Moritz** had the opportunity to take nephew’s children fishing, caught some bluegills.

**Chairman Matonich** provided an update on the Lake Gogebic meeting; it was well attended, had diverse representation, and the staff did a phenomenal job. It was good beginning. He will also be meeting with the local chamber to talk about the next phase. Matonich talked with the UP Wildlife supervisor on some deer areas, this is a stay-tuned type of thing. He also attended a turkey meeting at Demmer Center earlier this week.

August 13, 2015

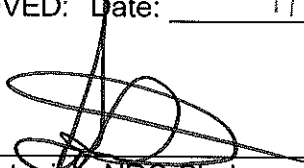
**Next Meeting**

**Chairman Matonich** announced that the next meeting of the NRC is scheduled for Thursday, September 10, 2015 at the MSU Diagnostic Center, 4125 Beaumont Road, Lansing, MI 48910. Committees meeting in September will be the NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries and the NRC Marketing, Partnership, Youth and Outreach Advisory Committee.

**Adjournment**

**Commissioner Nichols** made a motion to adjourn. **Commissioner Crumbaugh** seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 5:01 p.m.

APPROVED: Date: 9/10/15

  
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John Matonich, NRC Chairman

  
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Keith Creagh, DNR Director